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SUBJECT: Gandan Monastery Invites Dalai Lama for Visit

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(SBU) The third ranking lama at Gandan Monastery (the center of Buddhism in Mongolia) told poloff on May 18 that the monastery has invited the Dalai Lama to visit Mongolia this August or September. The monastery is now awaiting a decision by the Dalai Lama as to whether he will come, after which Gandan would have to work out the details of the arrangements with the Mongolian government. The lama confirmed that the Mongolian government has been informed about the invitation. He noted that, while Mongolia is trying to encourage foreign dignitaries to visit this year during the country's 800th anniversary, concern over the Chinese government's reaction meant that this potential visit would not be on the invitation of the government. The lama also commented that the Dalai Lama would have to be able to reach Mongolia. He observed that, prior the last visit in 2002, South Korea and Russia had both refused to allow the Dalai Lama to transit before Japan had allowed the transit.

SLUTZ